

Cove Fort  
Inter. of Routes 4 & 161  
Two miles east of Interstate 15  
Cove Fort  
Millard County  
Utah

HABS No. U-57

HABS  
UTAH  
14-COVFO  
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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. U-57

## COVE FORT

Location: Intersection of State Routes 4 and 161, two miles east of Interstate Route 15, Millard County, Utah.  
Geographic Location Code: 43- -027  
Latitude: 30° 36' 5" N Longitude: 112° 34' 53" W

Present Owner: Alice T. Kesler of Fillmore, Utah.

Present Occupant: Kesler Family (Guides and Custodians)

Present Use: Museum

Statement of Significance: Built by pioneers as protection against Indian depredations, this is the only well preserved original settler's fort in the state.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

## 1. Original and subsequent owners:

Charles Willden (1861)  
Ira N. Hinckley (for LDS Church-Mormons) (1867)  
W. H. Kesler (1911)  
Otto Kesler  
Alice T. Kesler (Estate of Otto Kesler)

## 2. Date of erection: November, 1867

## 3. Architect: None

4. Builder, suppliers, etc.: Ira N. Hinckley, Builder;  
Workmen: Hans Hanson, Horace Owens, James Owens,  
Albert Shales, Nathan Baldwin, Christian Hanson,  
Allen Russell, Dorus and Orange Warner.5. Original plan and construction: In April, 1869,  
Mormon Church official Wilford Woodruff visited the  
fort in company with Brigham Young. He described  
the new fort as follows:

"The fort is a very substantial building. I think it is the best in the territory. It is built of volcanic rock laid in with mortar. Each of the four walls is 100 feet long on the outside and 18 feet high from the foundation. On the east side is a gateway 14 feet wide, with a substantial arch 6 feet deep and 3 inches thick set inside. Above this preparation are being made for a lookout and telegraph office. On the west side is a gateway 8 x 4 feet with projections inside 10 1/2 feet wide and 10 feet high. The fort contains 12 rooms, six on the north side and six on the south side, 10 of which are 16 x 14 feet and two are 16 x 17 feet, and 9 feet 4 inches high. There is a chimney to each room, 3 feet wide and 2 feet thick. The chimneys are 6 feet above the top of the wall. The rooms are well lighted and have five paneled doors. The roof is covered with good shaved pine shingles. The entire building contains 2250 perch of rock, and 1975 bushels of lime and cost up to the present time, \$22,690."

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Building:

In 1860, Charles Willden and his son Elliot visited a site on Cove Creek with intention to settle there. The following year they moved their families there, and constructed two houses, one dugout, and a stock corral. The place became known thereafter as Willden's Fort. In 1867, the LDS (Mormon) Church bought the property and sent Ira N. Hinckley to erect a fort there as protection against the Indians, (The Blackhawk War of 1865-68) as well as to serve a mail route and travellers. Hinckley moved his family there and completed the new fort in the spring of 1867. He maintained the fort for 10 years, but no battles ever occurred there nor did the settlers ever have to flee to it for protection. The stage lines of Gilsmore and Salisbury stopped there twice daily, as well as freight wagons carrying goods to and from Nevada and California. After 1877, the Hinckley family maintained the fort until they abandoned it. In December, 1903, W. H. Kesler leased the fort from the Mormon Church. It had been abandoned for 18 months; the north side was completely burned out and stray animals had used the south side for shelter. The interior was rebuilt and in April 1904 Mr. Kesler moved his family from Beaver. In 1911, Kesler bought the property from the Mormon Church. The north side living quarters were restored in 1917, and the fort was again used as an overnight stopping place for tourists. The ownership passed on to the oldest son, Otto Kesler, and after his death to his estate.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Utah Historical Society Subject File "Cove Fort",  
Utah Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah.

2. Bibliography:

Alter, J. Cecil, Utah, The Storied Domain Volume I,  
The American Historical Society Inc., Chicago  
and New York, 1932.

Beckwith, Frank. Millard and Nearby, Art City  
Publishing Co., Springville, Utah, 1947.

Daughters of Utah Pioneers, Milestones of Millard,  
100 Years of History of Millard County, Art City  
Publishing Co., 1951.

Daughters of Utah Pioneers, Monuments to Courage,  
A History of Beaver County, Beaver Press, 1948.

Salt Lake Tribune, March 3, 1957 Cove Fort, A. R.  
Mortenson.

Salt Lake Tribune, August 27, 1967.

Prepared by John L. Giusti  
July 23, 1968

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural interest: Early Mormon fort to protect settlers and travelers from Indians.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent - South range original, North range restored after destruction by fire.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Within a square enclosure 100 feet by 100 feet a one-story range of six bays along the south side faces a similar range on the north side.
2. Foundations: Volcanic rock, 4' deep and 4' wide.
3. Wall construction, finish, and color: Black volcanic

rock-rubble. Outside wall battered. Cut red sandstone entrance arch. 25 gun portholes.

4. Structural system, framing: Masonry walls. Native lumber roof framing sawn at site.
5. Catwalks and flagpole: Of wood construction. Deck of rough sawn boards.
6. Chimneys: Six on each side, one for each room (12 in all). Cut red sandstone.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: 4 panel doors in deep paneled openings with wood lintels (1 for each room). Large double gate at east and small single door at west built up of diagonal boards originally filled with sand. 7" thick.
  - b. Windows and shutters: Double hung, six-over-nine, splayed paneled interior openings in south range. One-over-one in north range, restored in 1917.
8. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Single slope. Wood shingles.
  - b. Eaves: Plain.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: Two ranges of single room apartments face each other across a courtyard protected by east and west walls. All apartments are interconnected. The center two apartments in the south range were combined into a single large meeting room. The southeast room was used at one time as a telegraph office.
2. Flooring: Broad board flooring.
3. Wall and ceiling finish: Plastered.
4. Doorways and doors: 4-panel doors in paneled frame.
5. Decorative features and trim: Simple wood mantels in each room.
6. Notable hardware: Original strap hinges on west stockade door.
7. Lighting, type of fixtures: Fluorescent - not original.

8. Heating: Identical fireplaces in each room.

D. Site and Surroundings:

1. Orientation: Faces east on Utah highway #4.
2. Landscaping and walks, enclosures: Honey locust trees inside fort and in front of fort planted 1869. Concrete walks now run along fronts of ranges.

Prepared by Paul Goeldner, AIA  
Supervisory Architect  
Utah Project 1968  
July 15, 1968

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This record is part of a Utah Survey conducted in the summers of 1967 and 1968 under joint sponsorship of the Historic American Buildings Survey of the Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation of the National Park Service and the Utah Heritage Foundation.

Field work, historic research and record drawings were done under the direction of Project Supervisor Paul Goeldner, AIA (Texas Tech University) assisted by Project Historian John L. Giusti, AIA (University of Utah). Photographs were made by P. Kent Fairbanks of Salt Lake City.

Student Assistant Architects on the 1967 team were Robert M. Swanson and Charles W. Barrow, (University of Texas) and Kenneth L. Lambert and Keith Sorenson, (University of Utah). 1968 Student Assistant Architects were Keith Sorenson, Charles D. Harker and Robert Schriever, (University of Utah), and Donald G. Prycer (Texas A. & M. University).